

Boston Herald

9/4/88-Sun. 'No conspiracies' behind JFK, King assassinations

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department has officially ended its inquiry into the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr., finding "no persuasive evidence" to support conspiracy theories, according to department documents.

A Justice Department memo — dated March 23, 1988 — was obtained by a California ophthalmologist through the Freedom of Information Act.

It was the department's admittedly long-overdue response to the House Select Committee on Assassinations' recommendation 10 years ago for further investigation.

William F. Weld, who was head of the department's criminal division until he quit at the end of March, told Rep. Peter Rodino (D-N.J.), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, that all known leads have been checked.

"The Department of Justice has concluded that no persuasive evidence can be identified to support the theory of a conspiracy in either the assassination of President Kennedy or the assassination of Dr. King," Weld wrote in the undated memo.



CASES CLOSED: The Justice Department has ended its investigation into the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and John F. Kennedy, and has determined there is no evidence to support theories of conspiracy in the slayings. No further investigation was recommended.

Herald file photos

"No further investigation appears to be warranted in either matter unless new information which is sufficient to support additional investigative activity becomes available," he added.

The Justice Department's response to the conspiracy theories comes as no surprise. It is, however, the first time the department has made a formal conclusion on the assassinations, said Justice spokesman Dean St. Dennis.

The House Assassinations

Committee concluded in 1978 that Kennedy was "probably" assassinated as the result of a conspiracy involving a second gunman, a finding that broke from the Warren Commission's belief that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963. The House panel also said there was a "likelihood" that King's slaying in 1968 was part of a conspiracy.

The committee urged the Justice Department to investigate several areas of the assassinations, and one year later the department agreed

to conduct a limited inquiry focusing on an acoustical study presented to the committee.

The independent acoustical experts had concluded after studying a Dictaphone recording of a Dallas policeman's open radio transmissions that there was a second gunman on the infamous grassy knoll who fired a fourth shot. That evidence was the key to the committee's second-gunman conclusion.

Justice officials instructed the National Academy of Sciences to review that study and the Dictaphone recording, and academy scientists concluded in 1982 that the independent experts were wrong.

Weld — a former U.S. attorney in Boston — said the Justice Department had completed "virtually all" of its inquiry by the end of 1983, but delayed its response to the House Judiciary Committee "pending a complete review of all public comment" on the National Academy study.

"We have considered the review of all correspondence to be potentially productive," he said. But he said there was no "persuasive criticism" of the academy report, so the Justice Department has accepted its conclusions.